



Committee on Homeland Security
Report Prepared by the Majority Staff:

Critical Leadership Vacancies Impede United States Department of Homeland Security



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
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Executive Summary

The Department of Homeland Security became operational in the spring of 2003. This ambitious undertaking pulled together 22 existing Federal organizations into a single new Departmental entity. Since that time, contracting abuses, poor leadership, and low employee moral have been endemic.

As pointed out by the *National Journal* in its June 2 issue, one of the continuing problems appears to be the over politicization of the top ranks of Department management. This is evident in the fact that some 24 percent of all Department top positions are now vacant. This could lead to heightened vulnerability to terrorist attack when the new administration is installed in January of 2009 and the political appointees who now run the Department exit without ensuring continuity of operations. The gaping hole in Department executive resources is a homeland security issue that must be addressed and rectified immediately.



Background

This report provides a snapshot of the status of executive resources within the Department of Homeland Security as of May 1, 2007. For the purposes of this report, executive resources are identified as the following five types of positions:

PAS (Presidential Appointments with Senate confirmation). Presidential appointments requiring Senate confirmation in which the incumbent serves at the pleasure of the President.¹

PA (Presidential Appointments). Other Presidential appointments in which the incumbent serves at the pleasure of the President but do not require Senate confirmation.¹

SES (Senior Executive Service appointments). These may be both career and non-career appointments. Those who are non-career appointees typically serve at the pleasure of the agency head.²

SL (Senior Level appointments). Appointments for non-executive positions above GS-15 not meeting the requirements of the Senior Executive Service but without the fundamental research and development duties of the Scientific/Professional (ST) system.³

ST (Scientific/Professional appointments). These positions classified above the GS-15 level are for persons performing high-level research and development in the physical, biological, medical, or engineering sciences or in a closely-related field.⁴

¹ U.S. Office of Personnel Management website, page on “Presidential Transition Guide to Federal Human Resources Managements Matters,” <http://www.opm.gov/ses/transition/IL.asp> , accessed June 7, 2007.

² *Federal Employees Almanac 2007*, Herndon, VA, Federal Employees News Digest, Inc., 2007, p. 3.

³ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, “Guide to the Senior Executive Service,” U.S. Office of Personnel Management website, <http://www.opm.gov/ses/sesguide-managing.asp#senior>, accessed June 12, 2007.

⁴ *Ibid.*



Findings

Information compiled for this report from the Department of Homeland Security identifies a number of startling facts. For example:

SNAPSHOT OF VACANT LEADERSHIP
As of May 1, 2007 there were a total of 575 Executive Resource positions in the Department of Homeland Security
↪ 138 of these executive resource positions, 24 percent, were vacant.
... SEE FIGURES 1

A number of Department agencies and components are especially at risk. These are the ones with Executive Resource vacancy rates of more than the Department wide average of 24 percent:

EXECUTIVE RESOURCE VACANCIES BY DHS UNIT	
48% VACANT	Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy – 48 percent, 11 of 23 Executive Resource positions vacant
47% VACANT	Office of the General Counsel – 47 percent, 9 of 19 Executive Resource positions vacant
36% VACANT	Office of the Assistant Secretary for Intelligence – 36 percent, 8 of 22 Executive Resource positions vacant
34% VACANT	U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services – 34 percent, 16 of 47 Executive Resource positions vacant
31% VACANT	Federal Emergency Management Agency – 31 percent, 24 of 77 Executive Resource positions vacant
31% VACANT	Office of the Inspector General – 31 percent, 4 of 13 Executive Resource positions vacant
31% VACANT	U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement – 31 percent, 19 of 62 Executive Resource positions vacant
29% VACANT	U.S. Coast Guard – 29 percent, 4 of 14 Executive Resource positions vacant
... SEE FIGURES 2 & 3	



Findings

While the Department contends that 73 senior executive service (SES) positions added on March 1, 2007 may contribute to the high rate of vacancies, this is a false correlation. Of the 138 vacant executive resource positions in the Department:

51%	Vacant with no explanation (70 positions)
44%	Under recruitment (61 positions)
5%	Tentative or pending appointees (7 positions)
...FIGURE 4	

Finally, of the positions that had tentative or pending appointees, the numbers show that little progress has actually been made. Of the 7 positions with “tentative or pending appointees”:

3 had a tentative selection made
2 had unspecified pending appointees
1 had a pending non-career appointee
1 had a pending career appointee



Findings

Nearly one in four of the executive resource positions is vacant at the Department of Homeland Security. Whether the positions are unfilled because they are new or because the Department cannot fill them, the point remains that nearly one quarter of senior officials that the Department requires to conduct its business and protect our communities are absent. Because of the Department of Homeland Security's unique mission, this void directly impairs our homeland security and our readiness. This security delinquency is further frustrated when considering the issue of the coming administration transition. The *National Journal* has made reference to potential continuity of operations problems in its June 2, 2007 issue when they comment:

January 2009 has current and former officials particularly worried, because it marks the first time since 9/11 that the reins of national and domestic security will be handed off to a completely new team. At the Pentagon, this changeover doesn't matter as much. It has an entire joint staff of senior military officers who oversee worldwide operations, as well as regional military commands whose senior leadership stays in place. The Homeland Security Department, however, is another story. **It is still run almost entirely by political appointees and stands to be the most weakened during the transition.** (Emphasis added.)

In the four and a half years since the department opened for business, few career officials have been promoted into positions of senior or even middle management. As a result, most of the responsibility for running the department, and its plethora of critical missions, is still in the hands of people who will be walking out the door as the Bush administration wanes or leaves en masse after the election. "The department virtually has no backbench," Flynn says.

The upheaval that strikes all organizations during presidential transitions will be magnified at Homeland Security, which has the third-largest workforce of any Cabinet department. And because the department's primary mission is to prepare for and respond to catastrophes, **the magnitude of a terrorist attack or natural disaster during the transition could be compounded.** (Emphasis added.)

This is a critical homeland security issue that demands immediate attention. It is quite possible that the Department has begun to face this issue by its reported recent addition of several dozen new executive resource positions. But unless these positions are filled in the next few months mainly by qualified and experienced career civil servants who will have time to assume the main Department functions, the problem will remain. And so will the enhanced threat to homeland security.



Reference Attachments

Figure 1. Vacant vs. Filled DHS Executive Resources
 [Total Executive Resources = 575]

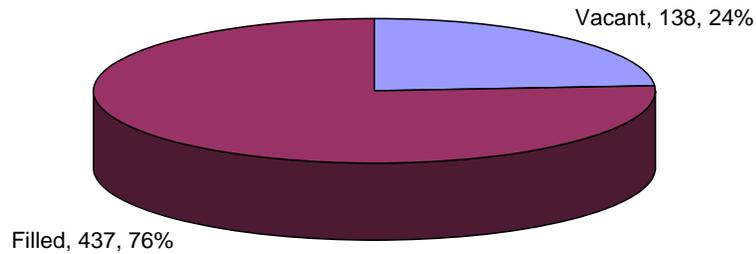
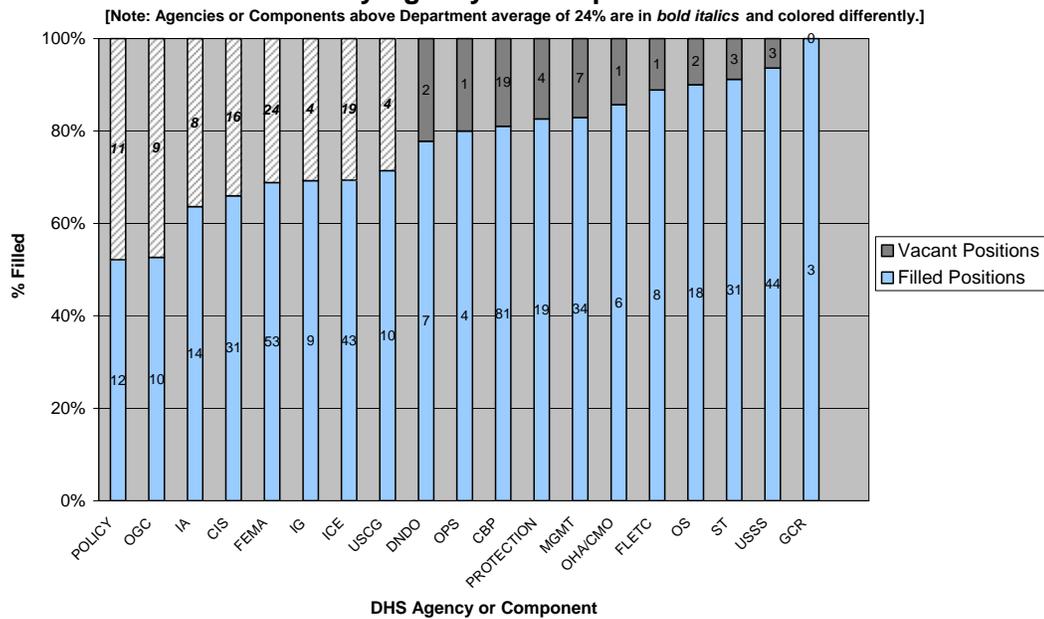


Figure 2. Percentage DHS Executive Resources Filled by Agency or Component





Reference Attachments

Figure 3. Percentage DHS Executive Resources Vacant by Agency or Component

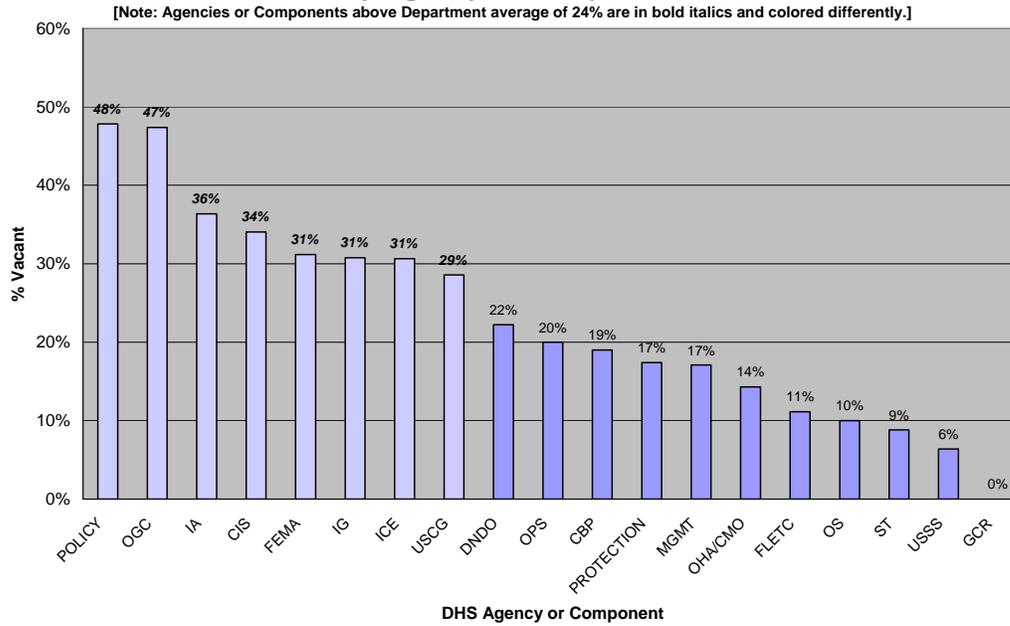
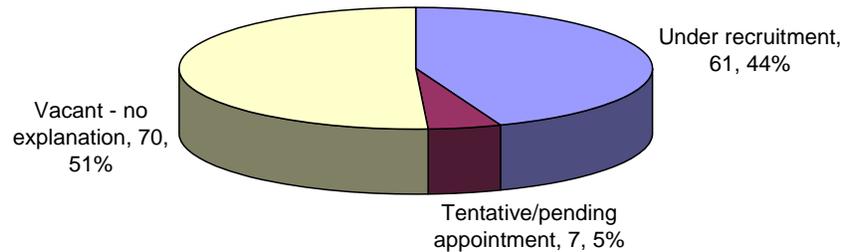


Figure 4. Status of Vacant DHS Executive Resources
[Total Vacant Executive Resources = 138]





Reference Attachments

Table 2. Department of Homeland Security Executive Resources

Vacancies as of 2007 05 01

[Note: Agencies or Components above the Department Average of 24% are in *bold italics*.]

Agency or Component	Abbreviation	Total Executive Resources	Filled Executive Resources	Total Vacant Executive Resources	% Vacant Executive Resources
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy	POLICY	23	12	11	48%
Office of the General Counsel	OGC	19	10	9	47%
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Intelligence	IA	22	14	8	36%
Citizenship and Immigration Services	CIS	47	31	16	34%
Federal Emergency Management Agency	FEMA	77	53	24	31%
Office of the Inspector General	IG	13	9	4	31%
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement	ICE	62	43	19	31%
U.S. Coast Guard	USCG	14	10	4	29%
Director, Nuclear Detection Office	DNDO	9	7	2	22%
Office of Operations Coordination	OPS	5	4	1	20%
Customs and Border Protection	CBP	100	81	19	19%
Office of the Under Secretary for National Protection & Programs	PROTECTION	23	19	4	17%
Under Secretary for Management	MGMT	41	34	7	17%
Office of Health Affairs/Chief Medical Officer	OHA/CMO	7	6	1	14%
Federal Law Enforcement Training Center	FLETC	9	8	1	11%
Office of the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, and Immediate Offices	OS	20	18	2	10%
Office of the Under Secretary for Science and Technology	ST	34	31	3	9%
U.S. Secret Service	USSS	47	44	3	6%
Gulf Coast Reconstruction	GCR	3	3	0	0%
Totals		575	437	138	24%

Source: Computations from data submitted to the House Committee on Homeland Security by the Department of Homeland Security May 2007.



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